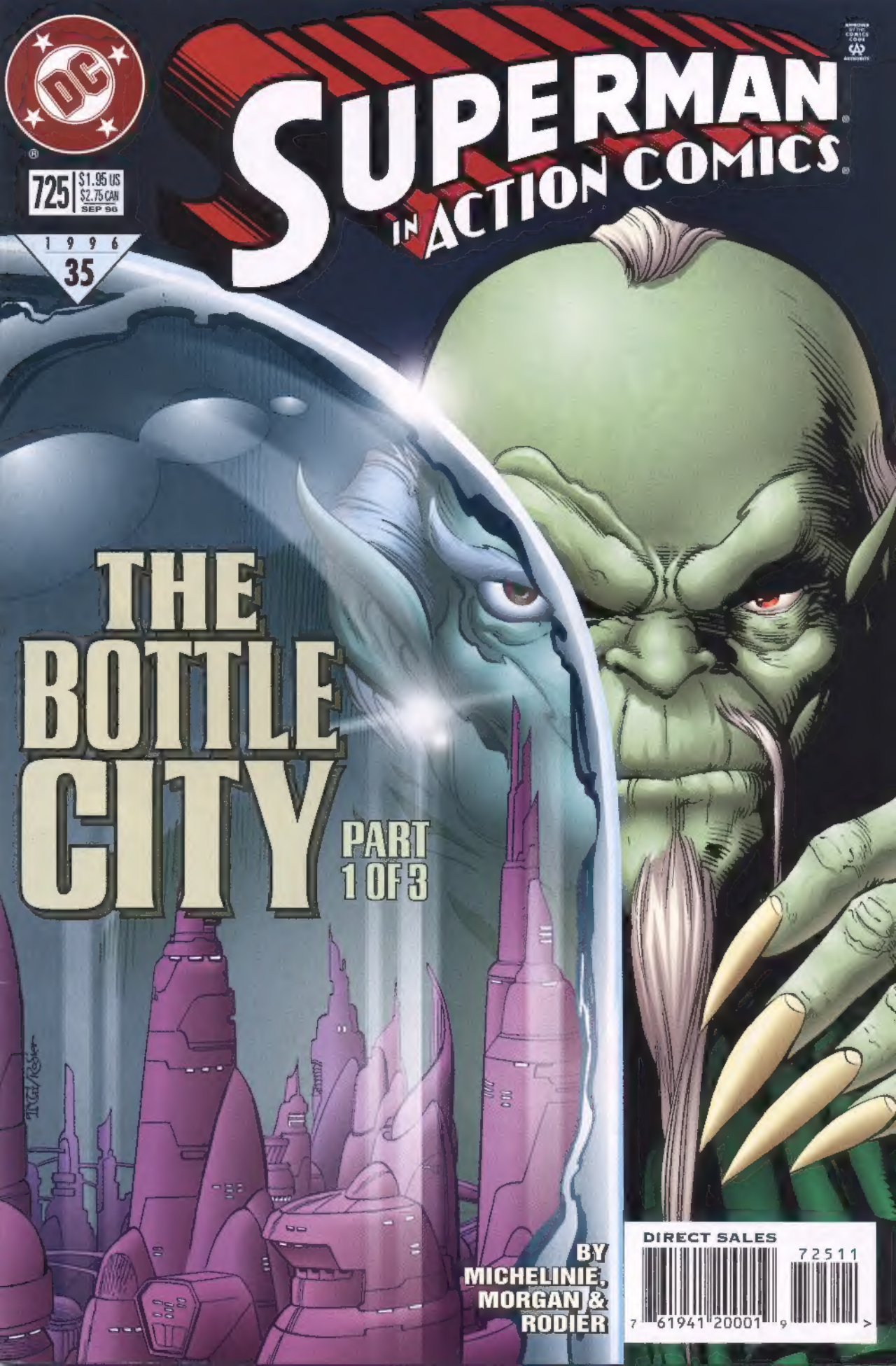
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THE BOTTLE CITY
PART 1 OF 3
BY MICHELINIE, MORGAN & RODIER
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METROPOLIS; CENTENNIAL PARK, WHERE THE DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN--
--GROWS SUDDENLY BRIGHTER!
I--IT'S HAPPENIN'! THEY'RE HERE!
AH KNEW THEY'D COME! THEY BEEN SENDIN' RADIO SIGNALS INTA MUH BRAIN FER YEARS!
WELCOME, FRIEND!
OL' JACK'S READY TA GO TA YER HOME PLANET!
JUS' BEAM ME ON UP!
9 VOLT
9 VOLT
YOU SEEM TO BE LABORING UNDER A MISCONCEPTION, STRANGER.

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I'M HERE FOR
SUPERMAN

I'M HERE FOR SUPERMAN

# VARIATIONS ON A SCHEME


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TOM MORGAN guest penciller
DENIS RODIER inker
BILL OAKLEY letterer
GLENN WHITMORE colorist
DIGITAL CHAMELEON color seps
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SOME HOURS LATER...
DAILY PLANET
NICE, CLARK. VERY NICE.
THIS ESSAY ON CONSTRUCTION COMPANY KICKBACKS WILL MAKE A SLAM-BANG EDITORIAL.
I WAS RIGHT TO PICK YOU TO REPLACE ME WHILE I'M ON SICK LEAVE.
THANKS, PERRY.
PERRY WHITE MANAGING EDITOR
MR. WHITE? HERE ARE THOSE PRINT-OUTS YOU ASKED FOR.
GOOD WORK, CARLA. I'LL TAKE THEM.
OH.
UM, WH-WHY DON'T I JUST PUT 'EM ON THE DESK? THAT WAY YOU CAN, ah, READ 'EM WHENEVER YOU GET THE TIME! 'KAY?
'BYE!
FUNNY, HOW SOME PEOPLE REACT--
--TO CANCER.

IF THEY COULD CATCH IT BY TOUCHING ME, DO THEY REALLY THINK I'D BE HERE, EXPOSING THEM TO IT?
FEAR IS A STRONG EMOTION, PERRY.
STRONGER THAN IGNORANCE? LOOK WHAT PEOPLE KEEP BRINGING ME: HOME REMEDIES, JUJU DOLLS, LEECHES! IF THIS STUFF REALLY WORKED--
--IT'D BE ON SALE AT EVERY K-MART IN THE COUNTRY!
AT LEAST YOU'VE GOT ALICE AND KEITH TO KEEP YOU GROUNDED IN REALITY.
UH, RIGHT. THEY'RE... VERY STRONG, BOTH OF THEM.
SOMETHING WRONG, CHIEF? YOUR WIFE AND SON ARE SUPPORTING YOU, AREN'T THEY?
WELL, I... I'M SURE THEY...
...WILL.
"THEY WI--"? YOU MEAN, YOU HAVEN'T TOLD THEM YET?!?
BUT THEY'RE YOUR FAMILY! WHAT IF THEY HEAR IT FROM SOMEONE ELSE? THEY DESERVE--
FOR GOD'S SAKE, KENT, DON'T YOU THINK I KNOW WHAT THEY DESERVE?
THEY'RE MY WHOLE WORLD!

IT'S JUST THAT, AFTER WE ADOPTED KEITH, HIS BIRTH MOTHER DIED OF AIDS, AND I STILL REMEMBER HOW LOSING OUR OTHER SON, JERRY, ALMOST DESTROYED ALICE.
TO FACE THE PAIN OF LOSING ME...!
BUT THEY'RE NOT LOSING YOU, PERRY. YOUR PROGNOSIS ISN'T TERMINAL. IF ANYONE CAN BEAT THIS MONSTER, IT'S YOU!
THAT'S WHAT YOU'VE GOT TO TELL ALICE AND KEITH!
YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE. GETTING THE NEWS FROM ANOTHER SOURCE WOULD JUST AMPLIFY THE SHOCK.
SUPER-HEARING-- PICKING UP MULTIPLE SIRENS!
AND X-RAY VISION SHOWS THE SPECIAL CRIMES UNIT CONVERGING ON CENTENNIAL PARK!
COULD BE A JOB FOR SUPER-MAN!
YOU'LL MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE, PERRY. YOU ALWAYS DO.
NOW MAYBE WE SHOULD BOTH GET BACK--
--TO WORK!

CENTENNIAL PARK.
WORK YOUR SQUAD 'ROUND THE OTHER SIDE, SANTIAGO!
WE'LL TRAP THIS TUB O' GOO IN A PINCER MOVE!
KBRATCH!
YES, SIR!
KEEP YOUR MEN BACK, DAN.
I'LL HANDLE THIS!
AH. I THOUGHT YOU'D SHOW UP--
--TO PROTECT YOUR GAUDY LITTLE TRIBUTE!

YOU... YOU'RE ONE OF THE TRIBUNAL JUDGES! FROM THE RACE THAT TRIED TO EXECUTE ME!*
NO, THIS ONE NEVER BECAME A JUDGE, THANKS TO ME.
BUT BEING OF HIS RACE ALLOWED ME TO OBTAIN WHAT I NEED TO DEFEAT YOU!
* SEE THE EPIC "TRIAL OF SUPERMAN" SAGA!
WHY IS HE REFERRING TO HIMSELF IN THE THIRD PERSON?
AND HERE'S A BETTER QUESTION:
WHY DON'T I WORRY ABOUT THAT AFTER HE'S SAFELY BEHIND BARS?
Huh?! G-GETTING WEAK!
CAN'T FLYYY--
;whnnnf;

I'VE LEARNED ABOUT YOU SINCE LAST WE MET, KAL-EL!
"SINCE LAST--?" BUT IF HE ISN'T PART OF THE TRIBUNAL, WHEN DID WE MEET?
FOR INSTANCE: THESE GENETILOCKS CAN WEAKEN YOU EVEN FROM AFAR,* MAKING YOU EASY PREY
OBTAINING ONE FROM COURT WORLD WAS SIMPLICITY ITSELF --FOR ONE OF THAT PLANET'S RULING RACE!
*SEE SUPERMAN #106
YOU CHEATED BEFORE, ESCAPED THROUGH TRICKERY. BUT NOW YOU'LL BE MINE--
--AFTER I'VE TAUGHT YOU DUE HUMILITY!
THWM
AHGK!
WHAT--?
BAD MISTAKE, BLUEBOY!
SUPERMAN'S GOT FRIENDS IN METROPOLIS!

THIS MAX-CHARGE IS STANDARD S.C.U. ISSUE! IT CAN BLOW A HOLE IN FOOT-THICK STEEL!
BWAM!
OR IN A SLIGHTLY OVERCONFIDENT COP, IF I DON'T GET MY BUTT COVERED FAST!
THANKS, DAN...
THWOK!
...I NEEDED THAT!
AND I NEED...
...A CHANGE
THIS ONE'S YOUR FRIEND?
THEN SAVE HIM!
NO PROBLEM.
FRAAANCH!

TURPIN'S JUST SHAKEN UP-- HE'LL BE FINE.
BUT THE "JUDGE" IS TAKING OFF!
NO NEED TO RUSH AFTER HIM, THOUGH! THAT ALLEY'S A DEAD END. I'LL JUST--
--HNH?
WHAT THE--
--DEVIL?!?

NORTHERN AFRICA.
MARA? LOIS. THIS FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT GIG ISN'T AS CUSHY AS SOME MIGHT THINK.
MY UPLINK'S ON THE FRITZ AGAIN. I NEED YOU TO READ ME THAT KHADAFFI UPDATE.
SURE, LOIS. I'LL JUST CALL UP THE FILE AND--
UH-OH.
SCREEN SAYS THE PLANET'S DATABASE IS BACKLOGGED. THERE'LL BE A HALF-HOUR DELAY BEFORE NEW REQUESTS CAN BE PROCESSED.
WHAT?! IT'S A HUNDRED-AND-TWENTY IN THE SHADE HERE--IF THERE WAS ANY SHADE! AND I HAVE TO WAIT THIRTY MINUTES FOR--
HELLO?
--MARA?
I DON'T BELIEVE IT! THE LINE GLITCHED-- I'VE BEEN DISCONNECTED!
OH, MAN WHY DOES ~FE ALWAYS HAVE TO BE SUCH A~

"--STRUGGLE!"
BETTER SCOPE TH S NEWCOMER OUT, USE X-RAY V.SION TO FiND SOME VULNER-ABILITY I CAN--
"--WAIT A MINUTE! THERE'S NOTHING THERE! NO INTERNAL ORGANS AT ALL! ITS WHOLE BODY IS A SOLID MASS OF SLUG--"
--GGZZZZ:
SGLOOOOOSH!
ALL OVER ME! C-CRAWL NG INTO MY MOUTH—:KaFF:-- MY NOSE!
I'M STARTING TO :gagk: CHOKE! H-HAVE TO EXPEL THEM, BEFORE THEY FILL MY LUNGS!
KGTHAFF!
OH, YUCK! TAKE A SUDAFED, MAN!

TOO MANY! EVEN IF I SLAP THEM AWAY AT SUPER-SPEED, THEY KEEP SLITHERING BACK! GOT TO SCRAPE THEM OFF--
--ALL AT ONCE!
SKBASH!
I'LL REPAIR THE DAMAGE WHEN THIS IS OVER...
...BUT AT LEAST MY "CONCRETE HEADER" CLEANED THE SLUGS OFF! NOW TO--
--BLAST! GONE! BOTH THE CREATURE AND ITS--
--SATCHEL? DIDN'T REGISTER BEFORE, BUT THAT PACKAGE THE SLUG-THING HAD LOOKED LIKE THE ONE THE JUDGE WAS CARRYING!
BUT HOW DID THE SLUG CREATURE GET IT?
AND WHAT DID IT DO WITH THE JUDGE?

SLIME TRAIL LEADS AROUND THAT CORNER MAYBE IF I FOLLOW IT I CAN FIND--hmm?
FLASH OF LIGHT! JUST LIKE THE ONE IN THE ALLEY BEFORE THE JUDGE--
--DISAPPEARED?
YOU LOOK CONFUSED, SUPERMAN.
GOOD...!
SAME BUNDLES THE JUDGE AND THE SLUG-THING HAD! COULD THIS WOMAN BE THE OTHERS--A SHAPE-CHANGER?
PACKAGES AREN'T LEAD, BUT I STILL CAN'T SEE INTO THEM!
I THINK SOME EXPLANATIONS ARE IN ORDER, LADY!
STARTING WITH WHAT A WARRIOR FROM APOKOLIPS IS DOING IN METROPOLIS!
AH, YOU RECOGNIZE HER RAIMENTS, DO YOU? YES, VOLCANA WAS FROM APOKOLIPS ORIGINALLY.
BUT SHE SERVES A DIFFERENT MASTER NOW:

ME!
WHOOSH
LAVA BLAST WAS INCREDIBLE! BETTER NOT UNDER-ESTIMATE--
--OW!
MY PALMS, WHERE THE LAVA HIT-- THEY'RE ACTUALLY BURNT! LOOKS LIKE I COULD LITERALLY BE IN THE FIGHT--
--OF MY LIFE!

MR. WHITE? MS. LANE ON LINE THREE.
DAILY PLA
HOW'S THE PLANET'S NEWEST GLOBE-HOPPING CORRESPONDENT?
NOT GREAT, PERRY. THAT'S WHY I CALLED.
LOIS! SO GOOD TO HEAR FROM YOU!
THIS WHOLE TRIP'S BEEN ONE FOUL-UP AFTER ANOTHER. NOTHING'S GOING LIKE IT'S SUPPOSED TO
I'VE HALF A MIND TO CUT MY LOSSES AND HEAD BACK TO TUNIS BEFORE--
YOU'LL DO NO SUCH THING, YOUNG LADY! YOU'RE A REPORTER-- ONE OF THE BEST. WHEN YOU TAKE AN ASSIGNMENT, YOU FINISH IT.
IF PEOPLE ARE COUNTING ON YOU, YOU CAN'T LET THEM DOWN. I KNOW IT, AND IN YOUR HEART--
--YOU KNOW IT!
;SIGH; GUESS I CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON YOU FOR A REALITY CHECK, CHIEF
YOU DO WHAT'S RIGHT NO MATTER HOW TOUGH THINGS GET. HOW CAN I DO ANY LESS? THANKS.
NO, LOIS..
...THANK YOU!

HAVE TO KEEP MOVING, STAY OUT OF VOLCANA'S LINE OF FIRE UNTIL--
--eh? SHE'S IGNORING ME?
STRIKING AT RANDOM TARGETS INSTEAD!
STARTING ONE FIRE AFTER ANOTHER!
THE NEW 97 MUSIC RADIO
HER LAVA STREAM'S UNEARTHLY-- BURNS HOTTER THAN NORMAL FLAME!
CAN'T KEEP UP, EVEN AT SUPER-SPEED! MY ONLY HOPE OF STOPPING METROPOLIS FROM TURNING TO ASH--
IT'S TAKING ME TOO LONG TO PUT THESE FIRES OUT!

--IS TO CUT THE DANGER OFF AT ITS SOURCE!
VERY FORCEFUL, SUPERMAN. NOW YOU'VE GOT ME--
--RIGHT WHERE I WANT YOU!
PLAYING ON YOUR OBSESSION TO PROTECT PEOPLE LURED YOU IN CLOSE! NOW YOU WON'T BE ABLE--
--TO AVOID VOLCANA'S KISS!
KISS THIS!
-:GLNGPH?!:-
CHOK!

CHOKING ON HER OWN MOLTEN SPRAY SHOULD KEEP VOLCANA OCCUPIED...
...AT LEAST LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO PUT OUT THE LAST OF THESE RANDOM FIRES!
NOW TO-- NO!
GONE AGAIN?
PHOTO
H-HELP! IN MY SHOP! A MONSTER--!
VOLCANA ...OR SOMETHING NEW?
SOUVENIR SHOP IS A SHAMBLES!
IT'D SURE HELP IF I KNEW WHAT I WAS UP AGAINST!
SALE

--THAT'S STRANGE. I CAN'T SEE INTO THE MIST! BUT THE ONLY THINGS THAT CAN BLOCK MY X-RAY VISION ARE LEAD AND--
--MAGIC?
IT'S BEEN FUN TAUNTING YOU, SUPERMAN!
WHO...?
BUT IF THIS CREATURE IS A SHAPE-SHIFTER, HOW COULD IT GET NEW POWERS JUST BY CHANGING ITS FORM?
Hmm... LIGHTS ARE DOWN. HARD TO SEE FOR ALL THE SMOKE. BETTER CHECK AHEAD WITH--
I'VE ENJOYED PAYING YOU BACK FOR THE INCONVENIENCE YOU CAUSED ME IN OUR PREVIOUS ENCOUNTER!
WHO?
BUT NOW, IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO JOIN THE OTHERS.
YOU!

YOU DROVE ME AWAY FROM SANCTUARY,* BUT NO ONE TWEAKS THE MIGHTY WIZARD'S NOSE TWICE!
NOW YOU'LL JOIN THE OTHERS IN MY SHRUNKEN CITY--
--TO BE PLUCKED FORTH AND POSSESSED WHEN I CHOOSE! YOUR POWERS WILL SERVE ONLY... TOLOS!
* IN SUPERMAN # 107.
"YOU THINK YOU'VE FACED HARD CHALLENGES BEFORE? BAH!
"YOU'VE NEVER HAD TO ENDURE SOMETHING LIKE THIS! PREPARE YOURSELF--
"-- FOR THE MOST DIFFICULT ORDEAL OF YOUR LIFE!"
CONTINUED IN MAN OF STEEL #60!